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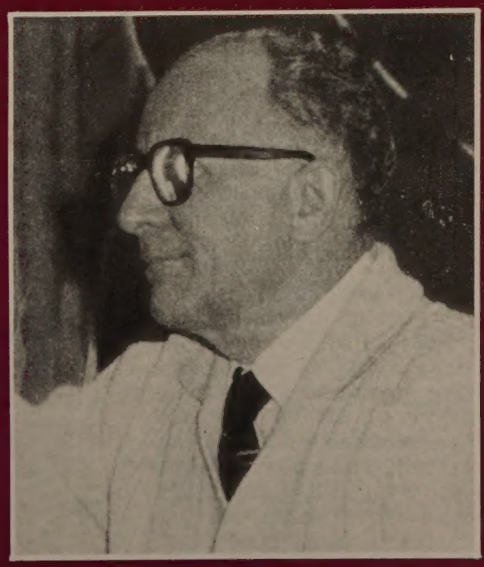

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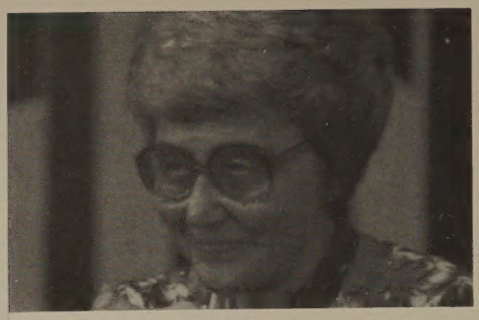

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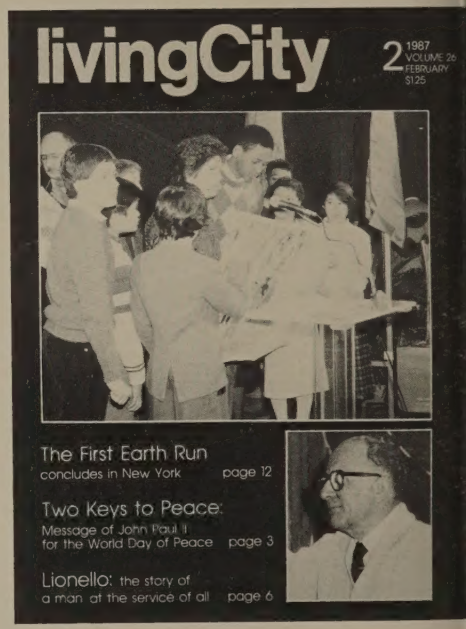
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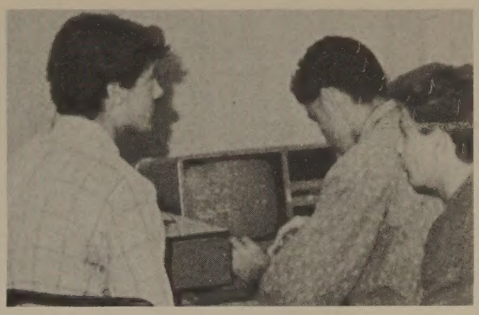

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Living The Present

Chiara Lubich wrote this reflection a few days after Lionello Bonfanti, a focolarino priest, left this life. In this issue we present a short profile on him.

Recently Lionello Bonfanti, one of the most mature and capable focolarini left this life. We owe a great deal to him for the life he led which was so crystal clear and supernatural. He was detached from the things of this earth and completely dedicated to the service of God and neighbor. His departure was sudden and unexpected not only for us, but also for him.

We are led to ask ourselves then: "How will it be for us?" We spontaneously conclude that it is good to always be prepared. How? By remaining in God's grace and living the present moment fully.

It was because of Lionello's departure which came about in this way that during the last few days I wanted to refocus my attention on that aspect which is so characteristic of our spirituality which consists in concentrating on living the present moment. My thoughts went back to many sentences from the saints, for example, who encourage us to put it into practice to perfection.

Catherine of Siena used to say: "The troubles of the past we no longer have, for time has fled. What is to come we do not have and we are not certain that we will have it." In this way she extended an invitation to live the present.

Then there was Teresa of Lisieux: "You know, my God, that in order to love you ... I have only today."

I also remembered a motto which had been useful to us in the past and was so easy to recall because each word began with an "s" in Italian: "Saro' santa se sono santa subito," meaning "I will be holy if I am holy right now."

But in these days I noticed how this way of living life was precious also to other saints who enthusiastically recommended it. Paul of the Cross wrote: "Fortunate is the person who rests in God's bosom without thinking of the future, but tries to live in God moment by moment without any worry other than to do his will well in every occasion."

"Fortunate is the person ... " We can make this good fortune our own because living like this is part of our spirituality. It is by living the present that we can fulfill all our duties well. It is by living the present that crosses become bearable. For good reason, this practice is recommended to those who are approaching death.

It is by living the present that we can grasp God's inspirations, the impulses of his grace which he sends us moment by moment. It is by living the present that we can fruitfully build our sanctity. Francis de Sales used to say: "Each moment comes with a command to be fulfilled and passes into eternity with what we have done with it."

Let us live the present to perfection, then! We will find ourselves at the evening of each day—and in the evening of life—rich in good works that have been accomplished and acts of love that have been offered.

Chiara Lubich

1) St. Catherine of Siena, Epistolario II, Alba 1966, p. 97; 2) St. Teresa of Lisieux, The Writings, Rome 1970, p. 818; 3) Letters of St. Paul of the Cross I, Rome 1924, pp. 645-646.

DEVELOPMENT AND SOLIDARITY: Two Keys to Peace

Excerpts from the Message of Pope John Paul II for the celebration of the 1987 World Day of Peace.

An Appeal to All ...

My predecessor Pope Paul VI issued an appeal to all people of good will to celebrate a World Day of Peace on the first day of each civil year, as both a hope and promise that peace "would dominate the development of events to come."[1] Twenty years later, I repeat this appeal, addressing myself to every member of the human family. I invite you to join with me in reflecting on peace and in celebrating peace. To celebrate peace in the midst of difficulties—such as those of today—is to *proclaim our trust* in humanity....

The theme I have chosen for this year's Message takes its inspiration from that deep truth about humanity: *we are one human family.* By simply being born into this world, we are of one inheritance and one stock with every other human being....

... to Reflect on Solidarity

... We need to *adopt a basic attitude towards* humanity and the relationships we have with every person and every group in the world. Here we can begin to see how the commitment to the solidarity of the whole human family is a key to peace. Projects that foster the good of humanity or good will among peoples are one step in the realization of solidarity. The bond of sympathy and charity that compels us to help those who suffer brings our oneness to the fore in another way. But the underlying challenge to all of us is to adopt *an attitude of social solidarity with the whole human family* and to face all social and political situations with this attitude.

> *"Our common bonds of humanity demand that we live in harmony and that we promote what is good for one another."*
> *John Paul II*

Thus, for example, the United Nations Organization has designated 1987 as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless. By so doing it is calling attention to a matter of great concern, and supporting an attitude of solidarity—human, political and economic—towards millions of families deprived of the environment essential for proper family life....

To Reflect on Development ...

Perhaps in no other sector of human endeavor is there greater need of social solidarity than *in the area of development.* Much of what Paul VI said twenty years ago in his now celebrated Encyclical is especially applicable today. He saw with great clarity that the social question had become worldwide.[2] He was among the first to call attention to the fact that economic progress in itself is insufficient, that it demands social progress.[3] Above all, he insisted that development must be integral, that is, the development of every person and of the whole person.[4] This was, for him, a complete humanism: the fully-rounded development of the person in all his or her dimensions and open to the Absolute, which "gives human life its true meaning."[5] Such a humanism is the common goal that must be sought for everyone. "There can be no progress towards the complete develop- ►

ment of man," he said, "without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity."[6]

... and its Applications Today

When we reflect on commitment to solidarity in the field of development, the first and most basic truth is that *development is a question of people.*

... *Another principle of development as it relates to solidarity is the need to promote values that truly benefit individuals and society.* It is not enough to reach out and help those in need. We must help them to discover the values which enable them to build a new life and to take their rightful place in society with dignity and justice.

... The solidarity that fosters integral development is that which *protects and defends the legitimate freedom of every person and the rightful security of every nation.*

Solidarity and Development: Two Keys to Peace

I have proposed that we reflect this year on *solidarity* and *development* as *keys to peace. Each of these realities has its own specific meaning. Both are necessary for the goals we seek. Solidarity is ethical* in nature because it involves an *affirmation of value* about humanity. For this reason, its implications for human life on this planet and for international relations are also ethical: our common bonds of humanity demand that we live in harmony and that we promote what is good for one another. These ethical implications are the reason why *solidarity is a basic key to peace.*

In this same light, *development* takes on its full meaning. It is no longer a question merely of improving certain situations or economic conditions. Development ultimately becomes a question of *peace,* because it helps to achieve what is good for others and for the human community as a whole....

> *"There can be no progress towards the complete development of man without the simultaneous development of all humanity in the spirit of solidarity."*
> *Paul VI*

The Commitment of Believers and Especially Christians

All of us who believe in God are convinced that this harmonious order for which all peoples long cannot come about solely through human efforts, indispensable though they be. This peace—personal peace and peace for others—must at the same time be sought in prayer and meditation. In saying this, I have before my eyes and in my heart the deep experience of the recent World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi. Religious leaders and representatives of the Christian Churches and Ecclesial Communities and the World Religions gave living expression to solidarity in prayer and meditation for peace. It was a visible commitment on the part of every participant—and of the many others who joined with us in spirit—to seek peace, to be peacemakers, to do everything possible, in the deep solidarity of the spirit—to work for a society in which justice will flourish and peace abound.[7]

The Just Ruler whose description the Psalmist sets before us is one who deals out justice to the poor and suffering. "He has pity on the weak and the needy, and saves the lives of the needy. From oppression and violence he redeems their life ..."[8] These words are before our eyes today....

For Christians can discern in these inspired words of the Psalms the figure of our Lord Jesus Christ, the One who brought his peace to the world, the One who healed the wounded and afflicted, announced good news to the poor and set at liberty those who were oppressed.[9] Jesus Christ is the One whom we call "our peace," and

The Holy Father with several leaders of the world's religions who met at Assisi on October 27, 1986 for the World Day of Prayer for Peace.

who "has broken down the dividing wall of hostility"[10] in order to *make peace.* Yes. Precisely this wish to make peace, seen at the Assisi meeting, also encourages us to give some thought to the manner of celebrating this World Day in the future....

Final Appeal

And so together we begin another year: 1987. May it be a year in which humanity finally puts aside the divisions of the past, a year in which people seek peace with all their heart....

At the beginning of this Message I explained that the theme of solidarity impelled me to address this to everyone, to every man and woman in this world. I now repeat this call to every one of you, but I wish to make a special appeal in the following way:

—to all of you, Government leaders and those responsible for international agencies: in order to ensure peace I appeal to you to redouble your efforts for the integral development of individuals and nations;

—to all of you who participated in the World Day of Prayer for Peace in Assisi or who were joined spiritually with us at that time: I appeal to you that we may bear witness together to peace in the world;

—to all of you who travel or who are involved in cultural exchanges: I appeal to you to be conscious instruments of greater mutual understanding, respect and esteem;

—to you, my younger brothers and sisters, the youth of the world: I appeal to you to use every means to forge new bonds of peace in fraternal solidarity with young people everywhere.

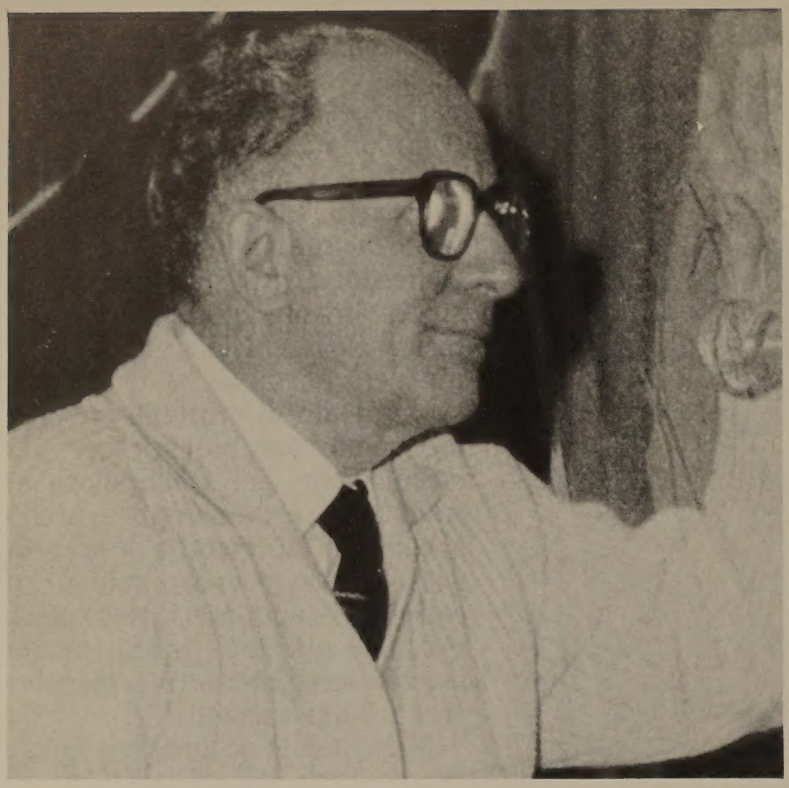
And dare I hope to be heard by those who practice violence and terrorism? Those of you who will at least listen to my voice, I beg of you again, as I have in the past, to turn away from the violent pursuit of your goals—even if the goals themselves are just. I beg you to turn away from killing and harming the innocent. I beg you to stop undermining the very fabric of society. The way of violence cannot obtain true justice for you or for anyone else. If you want, you can still change. You can profess your own humanity and recognize human solidarity.

I appeal to all of you, wherever you are, whatever you are doing, to see the face of a brother or sister in every human being. What unites us is so much more than what separates and divides us: it is our common humanity.

Peace is always a gift of God, yet it depends on us too. And the keys to peace are within our grasp. It is up to us to use them to unlock all the doors!

From the Vatican, December 8, 1986.

1) AAS 59, 1967, p. 1098; 2) cf. Populorum Progressio, 3; 3) cf. ibid., 35; 4) cf. ibid., 14-21; 5) ibid., 42; 6) ibid., 43; 7) cf. Ps 72:7; 8) vv. 13k-14; 9) cf. Lk 4:18; 10) Eph 2:14.



Lionello addressing an international convention of youth.

A MAN AT THE SERVICE OF ALL

Compiled by ORESTE PALIOTTI

Always Lionello, whether magistrate, priest or focolarino.

Such a sudden and unexpected departure! One would almost feel like saying, "How could you do it to us?" Lionello's departure was silent, unassuming, just like he was. It came in a moment when we all needed him: his natural family, his vast Focolare family (to which he had given the better part of his life's energy), and society at large which is always in need of examples of authentic, serene and faithful people.

Lionello Bonfanti was, in fact, one of these people. His very life reveals it, a life which began in Parma, Italy on October 10, 1925. He narrated the story of his life in brief, precise terms.

An episode of his childhood seems particularly symptomatic of what would happen later. Lionello wrote: *"I wasn't going to school yet when, during the summer, I went on vacation with my parents to a little village in the Apennine Mountains. While there, I often used to go visit a little old lady who survived by begging. I used to watch her while she spun. I spoke to her and I listened to her. Oftentimes I willingly accepted the pieces of stale bread that she offered me, for that was what she had received during the day. When I went home, I wouldn't eat what they had prepared for me there."*

It was easy to see throughout his childhood and adolescence that Lionello had been graced with an education and family life filled with serenity and affection, dignity and honesty and with the best that the Christian faith can offer to a family.

When the war started, Lionello was in high school, and in 1943 he started university while Italy was going through a difficult and dramatic internal situation.

"In that period of extreme laceration, of suffering and darkness," Lionello wrote, *"I was greatly enlightened by the social teaching of the Church. I remember the comfort it gave me to read the writings of Guido Gonella* (a well known political figure) *commenting the documents of Pope Pius XII on the inner order of nations and on international order."*

A strong interest in social problems lead him to register in

the college of Jurisprudence but, under the circumstances of the war, he could attend classes for only a few months. He started again in 1945.

During the war Lionello was arrested and imprisoned for having helped the Partisan Movement. There he was interrogated at length and threatened with execution, a punishment which the prison commander tried to defer when he realized that he had before him a very fervent Christian. He remained in prison for a month. This experience left a deep mark in his life as a judge, and yet he recounted that he experienced in those days the strength and consolation coming from a solid faith in God.

After the war Lionello studied hard and obtained his degree in law in 1947 with the highest honors. At the same time he was working with the Italian Catholic University Students' group with a special interest in spiritual formation. He was active politically with the Christian Democrats and, through his work in the St. Vincent de Paul Society, he assisted the poor.

Even with all these commitments, however, he was troubled by doubt: "*How can I reconcile the urging to work for a social and spiritual transformation of the world, (an ideal that lead me to risk even my life during the war), with the advancement of my career which, as I see in many of my young colleagues, can lead to a comfortable, mediocre life? I knew that it wasn't enough just to attend 'spiritual formation' meetings, study seminars and political conventions...*"

Perhaps this was why Lionello joined a group of young people committed to living a life based on the Gospel. Through one of his friends in this group, probably in January 1950, he met Ginetta Calliari, one of the first companions of Chiara Lubich, founder of the Focolare Movement. This is how he described the first encounter with this young woman from Trent: "*She spoke to us very simply, but with great conviction... The words I heard were so penetrating, and the kind of Christianity spoken of was so fresh and fascinating that I felt that I was hearing what Christianity was all about for the first time.*" ►

In 1950 Lionello (above the asterisk) belonged to a group of young people committed to living the Gospel. Several others from this group went on to assume places of responsibility in the Focolare Movement.

Lionello served as mayor of the Permanent Mariapolis located at Loppiano. Here we see him broadcasting from the Loppiano radio station.

In October 1950 Lionello was appointed a judge in Fornovo. He was the youngest judge in Italy. His work was demanding, yet he tried to keep in contact with the newly born Movement until, at the beginning of 1952, he met the members of the men's focolare in Milan. Theirs was a little community made up of professionals and laborers, students and office workers; there, mutual love had a very important place.

The impact of the encounter with this "life based on a radical choice of God and of fraternal communion, in poverty and simplicity, in joy and generosity", strongly attracted Lionello. The flame was fanned even more brightly in his following contacts in Parma.

"*I have never met anything so beautiful,*" he later recounted, "*and, even though I felt my life was not exactly like theirs since I was sure that my way would be to form a family and continue in the career I had just begun, I was certain that a family and a profession would have had true meaning only if viewed in 'that' light, only as an expression of 'that' love.*"

That same year in Parma, the first women's focolare center opened. The witness given to a love that can change hearts in an apparently difficult environment struck Lionello deeply. He wrote about those days, "*Their way of life was incredibly transparent. I had always had love for Mary, but now in those two women I saw such a Mary-like life to have the impression that I was understanding, for the first time, what it meant to be a Christian, that is, to be totally turned towards the Creator, fully available to the Lord and his plans to the point of being able to play the part of Mary and Jesus on earth.*"

Not long afterwards Lionello seriously faced the question of how to give God the first place in his life, relegating his other projects, even the consideration of a future family, to second place. During the Mariapolis[1] of 1953 in Tonadico, in northern Italy, having acquired this new inner freedom, he clearly felt the call to leave everything for God.

"*That community,*" Lionello later wrote about the Mariapolis, "*even though on a small scale, comprehended all the components of society. There were single and married people, priests and religious, children and adults, professional people and laborers. The presence of married people was an important factor in convincing me that society in miniature could be the model of society at large because it held within in a law of universal value. In fact, I would have most certainly refused an ideal of life which would not be valid for married people as well, since in my job as magistrate I had become more and more aware of the difficulties they often undergo.*

"*I saw that there, in that group of persons united in the name of Christ, notwithstanding their scarce material means and their normal human weaknesses, the Lord had deposited a light, a law, a richness destined to reach the entire world. It seemed to me that God, who is working in every phase of history in accordance with his divine plans which often take us by surprise and always surpass our imagination, was offering humanity one of his charisms. It was reaching humanity not through persons who withdrew from the world, or chose one particular state of life, but through a new 'people' who, with its yes, was participating in God's plans, becoming carriers of his gift, living proof of the strength of his word, bearing a collective witness to the power of the Holy Spirit.*"

Lionello therefore came into the Focolare. Or better, the focolare entered the house of Lionello in an apartment above his mother's which had remained free after his father's death and his sister's marriage. It was 1954.

Six years later, looking back at that first period in the focolare, he realized that while, at first, he felt he had been called *"mainly to live the phrase 'behold the handmaid of the Lord', meaning to be fully ready to do whatever or be wherever God wanted me, I later understood, in a very profound way, that the 'focolarini'* **belong** *to Mary; they are bound to her through a very substantial rapport according to a great plan of love. Furthermore, the will of God calls us more and more to 'be' Mary, both together and each one individually, i.e. to spiritually relive her as the one who generated Jesus, Jesus in the midst."*[2]

In 1961, in order to work full time for the Movement, he left his profession (in the meantime he had been appointed Solicitor General in Parma). The move left people speechless. A well-known Italian magazine *Gente* spoke about this magistrate who had "left his judge's robe for the bible". For Lionello, however, it was simply doing the will of God even though he loved his profession. Up until that moment, in fact, he had carried it out with exemplary care and with an extra insight, one might say, from the moment he set out along his new spiritual journey. This new insight had helped him particularly during his eight years as public prosecutor when his work was to formulate judgments which, in good conscience, conformed to Christian principles.

Among his various roles, Lionello was also the general manager of Citta' Nuova Press. He always gave himself with dedication whether it was in the courtroom or in the humblest tasks. He served as professor at the International School of Loppiano as well as on the General Council at the center of the Movement in Rome.

At first glance one could think that the demands of justice are irreconcilable with those of charity, but it is not true. The first fruit of love is actually justice, just as the greatest justice is always and only love. Lionello had understood this right from the very first contact with the Movement. He remembered the question he had asked one of the first focolarine: *"How can I be a living example of love when I am handing down a sentence in an obviously clear-cut case of guilt?"* The answer was inflexibly true: "It should not be you who judges, but Jesus in you."

Years later, recounting his experience as a judge to a group of young people, he defined it as "stupendous". *"How can you love a person while putting him in prison? It's not easy you know, but you can. And I've had this confirmed to me by certain people who have understood it. They came to realize that indeed they were being sentenced by a superior justice which introduced into an unfortunate event seeds of rebirth and hope."* ►

Following this period, Lionello lived in Rome, Grottaferrata, Turin and then for a long period of time at the International School of Formation of the Movement in Loppiano, near Florence. There he held courses for the young people who were preparing themselves to live in the Focolare. He also held the office of Mayor of the little city. Immersed in the many problems of a practical nature linked to the construction and development of Loppiano, Lionello's spiritual life became always more refined. Evidence of this can be found in some of the letters he wrote during that period. "*You always taught us that we can come out victorious from every situation only going straight to God.*" he wrote in 1969 to Chiara Lubich. "*Then Jesus finds in us his victory and we find ours in him. It is beautiful, it is majestic to live like this, humanly speaking in uncertainty but, at the same time, in a divine security.*"

"Then Jesus finds in us his victory and we find ours in him. It is beautiful, it is majestic to live like this, humanly speaking in uncertainty but, at the same time, in a divine security."

In 1971, looking back over the past two years he felt he could affirm that "*at times I have experienced what mercy is: it is a love that gives life, that puts up with everything and, because of this, wins and saves all and everyone. It makes you experience who Jesus is and protects you against practical and ideological deviations, and transforms the negative into positive.*" Then, he continued, only in "*losing*" *his "mental categories, even the things that seemed the most beautiful and just to me... could I be at the service of the charism of the Movement and not an obstacle to it. Here, too I have experienced such peace and an ever greater freedom: after every loss, an enrichment in terms of 'being'.*"

From judge to priest (he was ordained in 1973), the change occurring in Lionello continued. Regarding this particular step in his life, he spoke of the priesthood in a way that described him well: "*It means to be transparent because of love, to be more Jesus for the others, to be totally given to Jesus Forsaken.*"÷

In 1981 he went to work at a number of tasks at the Center of the Movement in Rocca di Papa among which was the one of contributing to the cultural formation of the "focolarini". To this end he wrote a number of acticles in **Citta Nuova** (the Italian magazine of the Movement) and **New Humanity**, and essays for the "Marian School".[4] For this work he was helped by the studies he had undertaken in Theology and Canon Law at the Lateran Pontifical University.

An expert in lay associations (it was Lionello, in fact, who coordinated the work on the part of the Movement for the abortion referendum in Italy), he

Lionello is shown here presenting a map to the Holy Father which indicated the spreading of the Movement in the world. The occasion was the Pope's visit to the International headquarters of the Focolare Movement in Rocca di Papa in August 1984.

followed the contacts with other associations and with the Italian Bishops' Conference.

His responsibilties grew, but Lionello's outlook remained the same: he made no distinction between what appeared to be more or less important. In his opinion one either dealt with people or with activities. For Lionello, who believed in the transforming power of even the smallest gesture when it is all permeated with Christian love, it was the same whether he was dealing with personalities of the secular or ecclesial world, or with a child, a beggar. Likewise, with that same simplicity, he worked at big tasks and humble actions of service.

In these past two years, Lionello did some very important and delicate work on the formulation and revision of the Statutes of the Movement. He gave the very best of himself to this work, almost as if he had an intuition that this would be his last contribution to the Movement, and perhaps his most precious one.

One who certainly recognized this quality in Lionello's work was Fr. Jean Beyer S.J., well-known canon law expert and professor at the Gregorian University. He remained deeply impressed by Lionello's great juridical expertise, by his ability to receive and harmonize every proposal, by his dedication, by his infinite patience; and he remembers him, with deepest respect and esteem, as a "man of service". □

1) See inside back cover. 2) Cf. Mt. 18:20. 3) Refers to the moment when, on the cross, Jesus cried out "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" 4) A school for theological studies within the Movement.

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

The First Earth Run

A world-wide torch relay for peace took place to commemorate the International Year of Peace and the 40th anniversary of UNICEF.
The Young for Unity did their part.

by Phyllis Scaringe

(to the left) Flanked by FER global runners, Linford Christie, a European Games gold medalist, ran with the torch in a relay through England.

(to the right)UN Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar holds the torch of peace aloft at the launching ceremony on September 16, 1986. Beside him is James P. Grant, Executive Director of UNICEF.

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

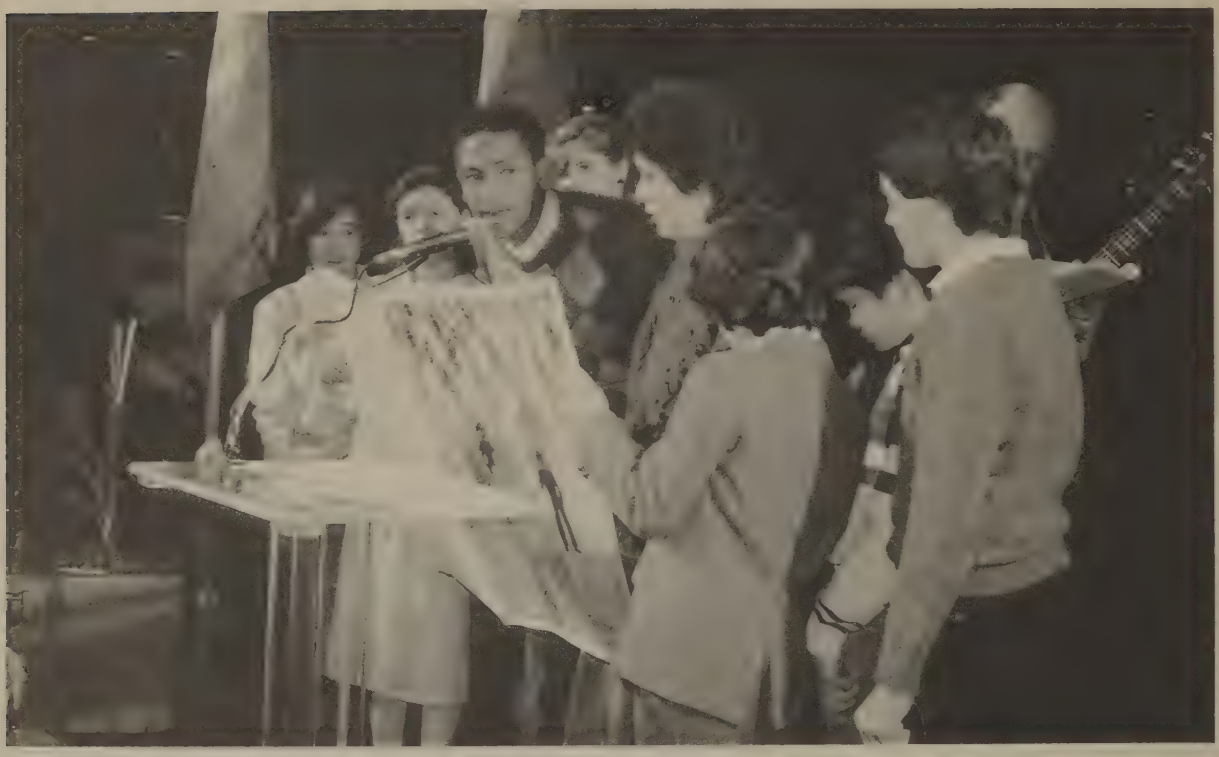
On the afternoon of December 11, 1986 New York City was suddenly blitzed with snow. The enormous flakes were lovely to observe but it was causing a problem at the United Nations where two thousand people were gathering for an outdoor ceremony to welcome the return of the "torch of peace."

After all, it had been eighty-six days since its departure on September 16, 1986, the International Day of Peace. Since then it had been relayed from hand to hand through fifty nations on six continents and had touched the lives of some 500 million people for whom its flame represented cooperation and hope for peace.

Expectation was in the air. First of all, it was the fortieth birthday of UNICEF. The return of the torch concluding the First Earth Run celebrated that occasion, as well commemorated the International Year of Peace.

Because of the weather the festivities were all moved indoors into the great United Nations visitor's lobby but no one seemed to mind.

Besides the youngsters who came out in the snowstorm for the event with their parents and teachers, were people from all over the country and the world who had in some way been a part of the First Earth Run, and others who came simply because they care about peace. The media who brought ►



(photo credit: Peggy Priel)

The Gen 3, representing the Gen Movement throughout the world, read their message to the United Nations at the ceremony marking the 40th anniversary of UNICEF and the return of the torch of peace.

the day's message into homes across the nation were there in full force.

Gen 3 boys and girls came—with others—to give their contribution to the day.

After a brief introduction describing unity as the goal of the Focolare Movement and its existence as another hopeful sign that peace is possible, Peter Yarrow, of "Peter, Paul and Mary" fame, quoted Chiara Lubich as saying that "Unity is another word for peace." Then the Gen, representing all the Gen of the world, read their message to the United Nations[1] with great conviction. The poster on which their message was written was then given to Mr. James Grant, the Executive Director of UNICEF, who emphasized the fact that it had been signed by 60,000 young people throughout the world.

Before the arrival of the torch there were songs and entertainment, and brief speeches given while a school choir stood poised in blue and gold on a staircase descending to the stage.

Larry Bruce, President of the United States Committee for UNICEF in a *Living City* interview expressed his hopes that through all those who had been reached today and throughout the 86 days of the relay, the world's consciousness had been raised to the need of saving and bettering children's lives. Ambassador Walters, the United States representative to the United Nations also addressed the audience.

The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Javier Perez de Cuellar, was there to officially welcome back the torch as it was carried through the crowd to the stage.

In the wings watching the return of the torch were David Gershon and his wife Gail Straub, originators of the idea of the First Earth Run, to whom *Living City* was at this point able to speak. David com-

mented: "Today is the fulfillment of a dream! Ultimately its success will be determined by the willingness of each person to sustain their commitment to continue to care, to continue to believe that we have a choice as to how we want our world to be. There are many more people today who feel that they can make a difference, and that was the goal!"

The program continued and was followed by a ceremony in the General Assembly which brought before the permanent representatives of the nations of the world an appeal on behalf of the children of the world for peace.

As the exhilirated crowd emptied out into the evening air, Mary Szczesniak, a Gen from Philadelphia who was one of the ten Gen on stage shared her feelings: "It was beautiful to see the recognition that was given to what the Gen are doing. It made me renew my commitment to live as a Gen because it was so clear in seeing all these people who want peace that what the world needs are people who love and know how to be builders of unity." □

After 86 days of travel around the globe, the torch, symbolizing hope for peace, returned to the UN where it enkindled an eternal flame.

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

THE FIRST EARTH RUN STORY

On September 16, 1986, the International Peace Day, a torch symbolizing peace was lit at the United Nations and then carried around the world in the First Earth Run. The flame for the torch was created in a fire ritual at a sunrise ceremony conducted by Amer-Indians. Present for the launching ceremony were dignitaries, celebrities and, fittingly, hundreds of children, since the task of UNICEF is to work as advocate on behalf of the children of the world. President Reagan sent a telegram in support of the earth run and the United States House of Representatives unanimously passed a resolution supporting its goals.

Gen Verde, the international musical ensemble of the Focolare Movement was one of the groups performing during the ceremony.

Sixteen runners representing the major geo-political regions of the world were chosen to travel with the torch. For the first half of the journey— through Europe, Africa, the Middle East and India— two teams of four runners each "leap-frogged" each other to alternate countries. In China ►

(photo credit: Gen Verde)

Gen Verde, the international musical ensemble of the Focolare, along with many other entertainers, performed for the dignitaries, celebrities and guests gathered for the launching ceremony on the International Day of Peace.

two more teams were trained for the rest of Asia and the Americas. The runners were chosen for their athletic ability, but even more for personal qualities of co-operation, flexibility and calmness in constantly changing circumstances. The teams were led by First Earth Run founder David Gershon, and Gail Straub, his wife and colleague.

The torch started with a 32 hour non-stop overnight relay to Boston and then proceeded on through New England. The torch was carried to the bottom of the ocean in waters off California by the son of oceanographer, Jacques Cousteau.

After Canada the torch was carried through Prague, Czechoslovakia marking the first time that country participated in a major international peace event organized in the West. In Warsaw, Poland the streets were flanked by candle-holding children for the five kilometers of the runners' route. Representatives from Yugoslavia carried the flame back to their own country. A relay starting at Red Square in Moscow passed by the Kremlin walls. In Hungary the flame went through 115 selected towns and was carried to an estimated two million people. From there the flame was passed throughout the major cities of Europe including downtown Berlin.

Before a crowd of 60,000 on Sunday, October 5, 1986 Pope John Paul II held aloft the First Earth Run torch in Lyons, France. It was carried across the border in a relay linking the Republic of Ireland with Northern Ireland. The torches arrival in Reyjkavik coincided with the first session of meetings between President Ronald Reagan and First Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. In Israel a relay involved both Jewish and Arab children culminating at the Knesset.

The torch was then carried throughout Africa: Kenya, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Uganda, Tanzania, Cameroon, before going on to Bahrain, and then India. In Nepal a flame was lit by the king and carried up Mount Everest. An eternal flame was lit in Lumbini, the birthplace of Buddha. From there it travelled throughout Asia and Latin America returning to the United Nations on December 11, UNICEF's birthday, when

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

(right) In the Ivory Coast 50,000 people gathered in the Sport's stadium and in Poland, (below) children holding candles lined the streets of Warsaw to welcome the torch of peace.

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

an eternal flame was lit.

Basically the First Earth Run was a way for millions of people to unite in a spirit of cooperation while raising funds for UNICEF. As the First Earth Run moved around the world, 10-15 kilometer relay events and celebrations were held in cities, called Host Cities, throughout the 86 day event.

The idea was the dream of David Gershon, a New Yorker. He thought of the First Earth Run as a global relay commemorating the International Year of Peace. UNICEF's Executive Director, James P. Grant expresses the goal in simple terms."We carry a simple plea: 'Give the world a chance: children need peace.' "

□

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

As the festivities for UNICEF's fortieth birthday drew to a close **Living City** *interviewed James P. Grant, its Executive Director, who shared his concerns for the health care of the world's children.*

"Today we have the means to avoid most of the malnutrition and serious ill-health in the world. It is not expensive, it is not complicated. The only thing is that it does take the same determination that two years ago led the people of the world to say: 'We're going to help the people of Ethiopia and Africa,' and the world did. We haven't quite yet made a similar commitment toward "the silent emergency" by which I mean the 14,000 children that die each day because their mother's don't know how to prevent diarrhea. And if they do get diarrhea, they don't have the low cost means of oral re-hydration to protect their children from the dehydration. We somehow need people to say that just as slavery is past, as we make strides against racism and against colonialism, the time has come to put an end to malnutrition.

We haven't gotten to the point where we say: 'Government, let's see to it that children are immunized.' There is no excuse for the fact that over half the children in this world are still not fully immunized and that as a consequence some 10,000 children die every day because they don't have fifty cents worth of vaccines in them.

And so my message is: 'Join in insisting that governments of the world act, and there are many individual kinds of things that can be done to move this process along. It is an education task which can be done and must be done. And the Focolare is doing a very valuable job in helping young people be aware and respond."

The Reverend Katsuji Suzuki (far right) representative of the Buddhist movement, the Rissho Koseikai, a Non-Governmental Organization of the UN, had the following words to say on December 11:

"There are several reasons which make me think that this evening was very significant. One is the cooperation of the Focolare Movement in this peace initiative. In working for peace—whether it be the United Nations or inter-religious organizations—grass roots support is everything. Deepening mutual understanding and supporting activities for unity can only be done through grass roots support. Even high level negotiations are a by-product of grass roots support. So tonight the support of the Young for Unity of the Focolare, their demonstration of support, seems to me to be very promising."

(to the left) Mr. James P. Grant received the poster from the Gen 3 with their message to the United Nations and in his interview expressed his appreciation for the work of the Gen 3 Movement on behalf of hungry children around the world.

(photo credit: UNICEF/Haroldo de Faria Castro)

The search for meaning

Question: We were shocked by the sudden death of a friend, killed in an accident. He was 16 years old and we had seen him just the day before.

In a society like ours where everyone tries to avoid thinking about death we teenagers are deeply troubled by the very thought of it and prefer not to talk about it. When we do, however, we get into deep discussions. We ask ourselves: "What is the meaning of death and life if we have to die in the end?"

A group of friends from Genoa

Answer: Yours is a question that people have been asking themselves from time immemorial. Death is a reality that accompanies every moment of our lives no matter how hard we try to ignore it.

It is true that we don't talk about it. Not to each other. Society today has rejected death as if it were an uncomfortable hindrance to efficiency, to planning a lifestyle based on "having" and unlimited progress. We don't want to talk about death because it is a relentless decline, a gradual letting go of everything to the point of becoming nothing: a defeat, precisely a dying.

If at times we stop to think—as you have done—about the reality of things, our projects and dreams, the goals we have reached, seem to fade and lose their consistency. We may come to realize that the things we often occupy ourselves with have little to do with life. Our lives seem filled with empty routine and mere survival.

This was my case but my search for meaning involved life more than death. The thought that death did not exist would not have resolved my questioning but would only have aggravated it. After looking in different directions in the hope of finding an answer, I felt as if I was on the verge of drowning in a sea of bitter disillusionment, living a life without meaning, when I met people who I could say really were "alive." They were young and not so young, married and unmarried, well-off and not well-off. The impact in meeting them was powerful.

I can very well recall one girl whom I found very similar to me. She worked as a salesgirl in a store. You would have said she was like everyone else, and yet she was so different.

What was so different about her? Why did I feel like a dead person in comparison to her? Where did her so evident sense of security come from? She seemed to be free in making herself totally available to each person. Everything about the person in front of her interested her. That was how she was with me, too. I was shy, introverted and complicated, but her serenity and freedom were contagious. I had the courage to ask her, "Why?"

This was how I discovered that the meaning of life is in loving and I began to experience the joy of feeling alive. Now I could say for myself that I had passed from death to life because I had loved.

Love had unequivocally led me to the one who is love, the source of that love and that life which had begun to blossom in me. Love led me to the encounter with Christ, the infinite expression of God's love for us. Jesus could well say: "I am the life."[1] He is, in fact, God, eternally in the Father and the Father in him. He is always life and eternal life. And yet he died, and really experienced death, annihilation. Why?

GENFEST 1987

For a United World

The 1987 North American GENFEST
will be held
at Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York
on April 27

"The Youth for a United World Movement: what is its purpose? To contribute towards uniting the world. What is its method? To follow all roads that lead to unity. What is its spirit? Christ, whom each one of you will seek to bring alive again in your hearts by living the Word. We will walk with determination along the various roads that offer solutions to the divided world by uniting it...."
(from Chiara Lubich's address to the participants of the 1985 Genfest)

Contact the Focolare Center nearest you for details.

(see inside back cover for addresses)

It came to my mind that since he is a person like us he had to open up our way of understanding Life, the life that he, God, had within him. It is life which is love and does not know the word "end." In fact, Jesus is risen and all of us in him.

Now death teaches me how to live: I live if I love, I love if I do not exist for myself. I live if I am dead to myself.

For sure, also in this lifestyle there is pain because there is renunciation, but life is nothing other than a process of maturation that comes by passing through the purification of suffering.

I will have the fullness of life when I will be completely free from myself, that is, dead to myself.

For me as a believer this fullness of life means identification with the Life which is Jesus. This extraordinary life that already exists in us will fully manifest itself on the last day when we will participate with all our being at the future resurrection.

Death remains what it is for everyone: a unique, powerful and an even feared experience. But it no longer signifies that my life has no meaning. It no longer implies absurdity, failure, the end.

Then, what is my answer? The meaning of life and death is: to win Life for myself.

Eletta Fornaro

1) John 11:25.

Building unity on the job

The following are experiences of members of the New Humanity Movement involved in various fields of human endeavor.

Economy and Work

Bridges of unity

I am a counselor and weight lifting coach for a rehabilitation agency whose purpose is to help juvenile delinquents become contributing members of the community. Every year, my agency sponsors an official weight lifting tournament, inviting other juvenile placement agencies from all over the state to bring their young men to compete. This year, I was responsible for coordinating the tournament.

In trying to live the spirituality of unity well, I wanted to get the tournament invitations out early so that other agencies would have plenty of time to make all the necessary staff assignments, schedule weight lifting practice, and arrange transportation. I wrote a letter containing an invitation and all the details of the tournament, and asked a new secretary to type it. Being new on the job, she really wanted to make a good first impression. She did a very fine job of typing the letter, arranging the tournament details on the page for easy reading. I was pleased with the letter and I told her so.

Then the head secretary came in and asked what the secretary had been doing. My secretary explained she had been typing this particular letter for the weight lifting tournament and proceeded to show it to the head secretary. After looking at the letter, the head secretary raised her voice in impatience saying that it was not typed according to agency format, and so it was worthless. She ripped up the letter and threw it in the wastebasket.

This was one of several incidents in which I felt the head secretary had mistreated fellow employees. I really felt I had a right to dislike and resent her. My "old self"[1] wanted to never see or speak to her again. I couldn't understand why she was often insensitive to other people.

But thinking of what I had just learned at the Mariapolis,[2] I remembered that even the head secretary was a candidate for unity, and that I had to make myself one with her. I couldn't "make myself one" with someone I didn't know, so I began asking other staff about her. I found out that she did so much work that it would take at least two people to replace her. She also financially supported her two children and her husband, who was unemployed. She had an incredible number of responsibilities, and she spent long hours at work and at home working for our agency. I also found that the agency didn't show her much appreciation for her work.

In making myself one I began to understand the pressure of work and home life that she was living under. I told other people about the stress she was living under, and in this way other people, including my secretary, began to respect and understand the head secretary more. I began to look for a concrete way to give her public recognition from the agency for her work.

The head secretary and three other secretaries helped me with the announcing, scoring, and organizing of weight categories all through the day of the weight lifting tournament. In the past, after the tournament the weight lifters and coaches were invited to a banquet where they would receive nice jackets with their names on them, and a catered meal. For years, the men involved had been invited to this banquet, but the secretaries had not. In talking with the head secretary and the other secretaries, I found that they resented the administration for

not recognizing how much work they do for the tournament, too. I felt that something should be done to rectify the situation.

I called the executive director and told him that I thought the secretaries should be invited to our banquet, and they also should receive a jacket with their name on it. To my surprise he agreed with me. When I presented the head secretary with a jacket with her name on it at the banquet, I also told the crowd how much work she and the other secretaries had done for our agency. She and the secretaries were so happy to be appreciated that they cried as they received their jackets.

Since then there has been a greater unity between the secretaries and the head secretary, between the secretaries and the administration, and between the head secretary and me.

M. M.

1) cf. Col 3:9; 2) the annual summer gatherings of the the Focolare Movement.

Medicine

Seizing the opportunity

A recent experience really helped me to see how one person can really make a difference in their work environment.

As a doctor I often attend medical conferences and it's impossible to go to one without hearing beepers constantly going off. I carry one too, and I get a lot of calls, as many as five or ten at evening time and forty or fifty during the weekend.

This is a source of tremendous stress in my life which I try to channel into opportunities to love my neighbor. When I get a call, instead of answering, 'Yes, what do you want,' I've been trying to say, 'How can I be of service to you?' and I say to myself that I'm going to try and love this person as much as I can which, over the telephone wire, is not always easy. But, for instance, I try to sound as cheerful as possible and not get angry, no matter what the request, even if someone has had a rash for four weeks and they decide to call me at 2 in the morning.

What is really a challenge is to try and do it all the time, no matter who is on the other end of the line—the operator, a patient, another doctor, or when I'm called back to the emergency room.

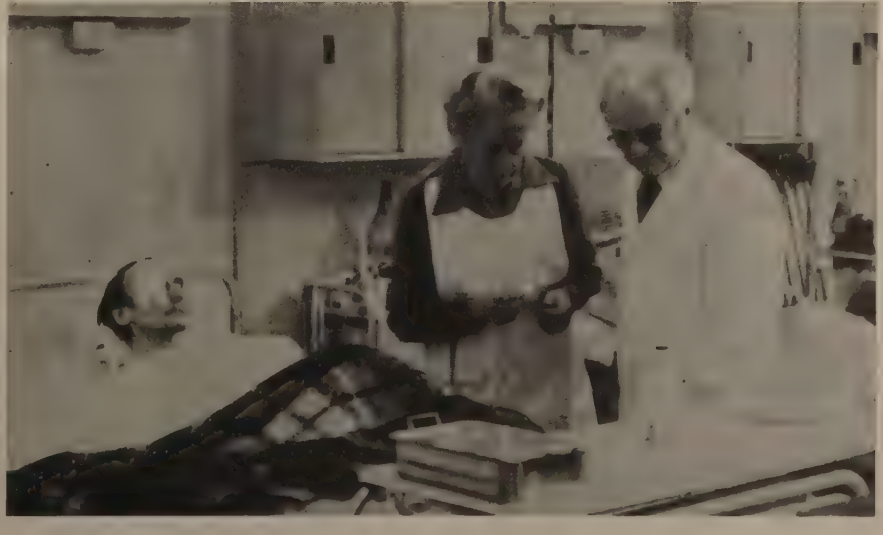
I was trying to do this for several months and not really thinking too much about it. I wondered once if anyone was even noticing, but I put this thought aside since what counted was to love.

One day, however, I was down by the emergency room and the nurses were saying, 'Oh, Dr. S. we're so glad when you're on call, because you never lose your patience with us. Whenever we see that it's your name it's always a relief.'

Then, I had to have my beeper battery changed so I went in to the office where they do it. Several answering service operators were there and they said, "You know, Dr. S., when you're on call, it's so nice to be able to call you. You don't get angry, and you don't yell at us."

I decided I'd better continue with the challenge."

T.S.



WORD OF LIFE

"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment" (Mt. 5:22).

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

This sentence places us in the context of the Sermon on the Mount. Through Moses, God had severely condemned killing as the highest expression of the absence of love for one's brother or sister.

Now Jesus is telling us here that not only killing but even the simple attitude of resentment, the least offensive word toward one's neighbor, should be eliminated from the community, from the kingdom of God.

Obviously Jesus is not referring to those quick outbursts that escape us and for which we are immediately sorry but rather to an angry attitude which we deliberately choose and encourage, that explodes then in offensive gestures and words toward our neighbor.

"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

By strongly condemning both killing and an angry attitude, Jesus did not intend to say that they were of equal seriousness. He simply was recalling our attention to the importance of our inner feelings and attitudes. God will judge our heart, our attitude even before he judges us on our actions. Although they are not as serious as killing, even the little things we do against charity (provided, of course, that they are deliberate and encouraged by us) nevertheless come from the same root: the human heart unwilling to love.

"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

But who precisely is this brother? As we know, Jesus greatly expanded the meaning of the term. He said: "As often as you did it for one of my least brothers, you did it for me" (Mt 25:40). By identifying himself with every human being he is telling us that every person is our brother.

But if it is true that every person is our brother, we have a particular responsibility to maintain unity with those who share the same faith and the same life of grace. Therefore, if the offenses, resentments and conflicts among people in general merit reproof, even more so do they when they take place among Christians.

Anger, hostility, or hatred among them is a real contradiction in terms.

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers shared with us.

"I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgment."

How then should we live this word of life? Certainly it prompts us to examine our way of acting, speaking, and relating to our neighbor.

Above all this phrase seems to have the purpose of calling our attention to the roots of our actions. It can, in fact, happen that we manage to avoid offending or openly clashing with our neighbor. We need to ask ourselves, however, which is the real attitude we have toward that person. Are we sincerely willing and ready to let go of our point of view in order to reach out to him or her? Do we make the effort to go beyond the differences that divide us? Are we able to break down all those barriers within us caused by feelings of dislike, resentment, rejection, etc.? To put it briefly: is our attitude inspired by love?

If it is, we are truly headed in the direction that Jesus indicated.

Then, we will live this word of life well because we have made the decision once again to love every neighbor as we would love Jesus.

Chiara Lubich

On the bus

One day after classes I took the bus to go to the evening mass at a parish near the university I attend. On the bus, I was standing beside a lady who after a short while started talking to me in an agitated manner. It soon became clear that she was mentally ill and I instinctively thought of stepping further down the aisle to avoid getting involved with her. Before I could move, the thought came to me that although I was on my way to meet Jesus in the Eucharist I was forgetting his presence in this lady. I realized I could not seek him in one form and try to avoid him in another.

I stayed there and tried to speak kindly to her and keep the conversation going as well as possible. She wasn't aggressive and seemed actually eager to talk to me, but her confused talk and loud voice started to attract the attention of other riders to us. Being of a somewhat timid disposition, I again felt compelled to walk away from the focus of atten tion. However, I found the courage to stay by recalling the Word of Life for that month which was Paul's exhortation to Timothy: "The Spirit God has given us is no cowardly Spirit, but rather one that makes us strong, loving and wise." I knew the Holy Spirit would give me the strength to face that adverse situation in order to love a neighbor.

We kept on talking for several minutes. I told her a little about my studies, my hometown, and a few other things. However, the bus was getting crowded and the moment came when I really had to move on to make room for the people coming in. I said good-bye and she replied saying also that she was glad to have run into me. I, too, was happy for having overcome my natural inclinations in order to love her and live the Word of Life in a concrete way.

D.C.

Real and false peace

God has mysterious ways of letting us know when we're off track. My principal (I am a teacher) and I, besides working well together at our school, are also personal friends. In fact, we do many things together and since we live in close proximity, it is quite convenient for us. Of course, living in such closeness can also present problems: not big ones, but the daily little gnawing type. Well, that's exactly the type that cut our relationship off, both at work and personally, to the point of complete lack of communication except in dire need. At first, I thought it would all blow over in a day or two and all woud be well again. I was ►

wrong! Not only that, this disunity permeated the entire faculty and even the public school intermediate unit teachers who service our private school. Up to that moment, everyone enjoyed being with us at our school; now all was changed. The atmosphere was tense, to say the least. Actually, it was devastating.

This tenseness went on and on and became more severe each day. I felt that I had not done anything on purpose to cause this rift and I was neither angry nor did I have any rancor in my heart toward the other. In fact, I was even "peaceful" inside. But I had made up my mind that I would not go first to be reconciled because I was tired of doing that (I always seemed to be the one giving in at other times, too) even though I hungered for reconciliation. At first I said to myself, "This is Jesus For saken[1] in my life at this moment so I will embrace this suffering and carry on as usual." I tried to do that and I was successful, I guess.

At school I taught harder than ever and kept on with all the extra work, too. But nothing was happening. I could see our wonderful faculty suffering and becoming angry, too, even though the initial cause of this disunity had nothing to do with them in the least.

At home, I began avoiding people and finally one evening I realized that I could no longer wait for the other to come to me: I had to be the one to do it. By this time, it didn't even matter whose fault it was.

But now the problem was right in my lap. How do I go about this attempt at reconciliation? I knew that direct confrontation would most likely end in rejection. I kept reminding myself that timing would be crucial. Well, no time seemed like the right time. Then I thought of the Word of Life of the month, "Welcome one another, therefore, as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God" (Romans 15:7). So one Friday evening after school, I kept hanging around waiting for the right moment and the proper words. What agony! I went to another room, came back, stalled a little more and finally admitted, "I just can't do this!"

So I left and went into the chapel. Right behind me came the other and then I got the courage to do it. I turned around and said, "I need to go out after dinner to pick up something. Will you come with me?" She paused, thought for a moment, and then replied, "Okay."

What a joy! Needless to say, both my prayer that evening and the shopping trip brought great benefits.

G. R.

1) Refers to Jesus in the moment when, on the cross he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Mt 27:46).

Battling frustration

For some time now I've been battling frustration arising from several sources: a kitchen drawer filled with receipts, a dresser drawer storing warranties and guarantees, a box in the closet acting as a file, the space under my bed standing in for a bookshelf. It was eminently clear that I needed a place to organize papers, etc.

Our home, however, is small: I couldn't really see where else to store these papers, not to mention the monolithic manual typewriter, recently acquired. A desk, I concluded, was the answer. When I began to price them, though, instead of the $60.00 range which was *my* budget, I ran into the $600.00 range. I decided to build. I sat down, drew the plans: hanging file, bulletin board, drawer, space for the typewriter, shelf for books and cassettes.

The next day I went to the lumberyard with my dimensions. As soon as I put foot in the store I immediately knew that in pulling out my simple plans before these experienced carpenters, I'd have to die a bit to myself. In fact, the gentleman carpenter, finding my sketches humorous, called over several of his co-workers to chuckle along with him. On the heels of my embarassment came the Word of Life: "To love God with all our heart, with all our thoughts and with

(Continued on page 28)

MARIAPOLIS 1987

The Mariapolis gatherings are the summer meetings of the Focolare, held every year, for those who wish to come into contact with it.

For one week the Mariapolis offers to hundreds of people of all ages and walks of life a very full program that includes general sessions with talks on the spirituality of unity, sharing of experiences in living this spirituality, documentaries, meetings in small sharing groups and recreational programs. The Mariapolis is a time for prayer and recollection. The celebration of the Eucharist is at the center of each day and all participants gather together at the conclusion of the activities for evening prayer.

Children have separate activities which involve them in the life of the Mariapolis through various spiritual and recreational programs. Special programs are available for teenagers as well.

The week, however, is more than the sum of its parts. It is an experience of how life, also every day life, can be transformed if love and unity are its foundation. When the Mariapolis ends, people find that it was not only a tremendously enjoyable week, but they have experienced a way of living that they will be able to bring back home.

SOUTHWEST:

Las Cruces State University
Las Cruces, New Mexico
June 28, after supper -
July 4, after breakfast

MIDWEST:

Hope College
Holland, Michigan
July 12, after supper -
July 18, after breakfast

EAST COAST:

Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York
July 19, after supper -
July 25, after breakfast

Mariapolis Luminosa
Hyde Park, New York

July 26 including supper -
August 9, after lunch

Space is very limited.
If you are interested in attending please contact the Focolare Center nearest you.
(See inside back cover for addresses)

(Continued from page 26)
all our strength, and to love our neighbor as ourselves is worth more than any burnt offering or sacrifice" (Mk. 12:33). I realized that these gentlemen were my neighbors, and I had only to love.

My next step was to go to the wood hobby shop to use the saws. When I walked in, the man at the desk, barely looking up, said: "Madam, the ceramics shop is next door." I felt like going out again, but instead I smiled and explained that I was hoping to learn how to use the tools.

"You?" he asked. I explained that I was building a desk. "Well, what tools do you know how to use?" he asked. "A hammer and a saw," I said. Wearily he got up; it was obvious that he was not happy with his job of checking me at the saw. I remembered again that I had only to love my neighbor, and do my best to "make myself one" with him. He told me to go ahead and bring in my lumber. As I carried the 4 x 8 sheets of plywood and boards in, he stood by, arms folded, watching. When I had leaned the wood against the saw table, I looked up and directly over the saw hung a graphic, gory picture.

It depicted in vivid detail what happened when safety was not practiced. It unnerved me, but again I remembered that what I had to do was to continue loving which meant listening to the man carefully. When I finished, I cleaned up everything and carried all my pieces out.

Back home, while assembling the parts, I realized that one board was left uncut. The very last thing I wanted to do was return to that shop, but again the Word of Life came to my mind reminding me that I had simply to focus on loving God and my neighbor.

When I came back through the shop door, the man looked up and said: "You again? Now what?" I explained that I had forgotten one board and had come back to take care of it. For the first time he looked interested.

"What did you say you were making?" he asked. It was, I explained, to be a desk with a bookcase over it.

"What are the boards for?" he asked. With sufficient pride at the progress made thus far, I replied, "The bookshelf!" "Oh," he said, matter-of-factly. "Those boards are too narrow."

I assured him, however, that since my books were just paperbacks, the boards would be fine.

Back home, putting it all together, I realized that he was right: the boards were, indeed, too narrow. It all looked terribly off-balance. I decided on longer boards and the "old self"[1] within me suggested discreetly, "Why don't you take the new boards to a friend's house to have them cut?" The Word of Life, though, which had been my mainstay throughout this undertaking, returned again to my mind: I had only to love.

I returned to the hobby shop. Since the man was very busy, I was just about to ask for the key to go ahead on my own when it hit me even more clearly and forcibly than before that I was back in that shop not to cut my boards but to love.

I walked over and held steady the boards which the man was trying to keep aligned for the saw. I admired his excellent work and, as he worked, he began to talk about his projects and show me some of his pieces. Quite a while later he said, "But you must have come back for something!" I knew that in order to love completely, I had to let go of my ego completely, so I told him that he had been absolutely right about the shelves: I needed new boards cut. Immediately he said, "Here give them to me. I'll cut them. I saw that my gory picture kind of bothered you before." Then he insisted on carrying the boards out to the car. I knew it was the hundredfold and he too was happy when he said, "Good luck with your desk! I'll be here to help you on your next project!"

M.H.

1) Col. 3:9.

What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

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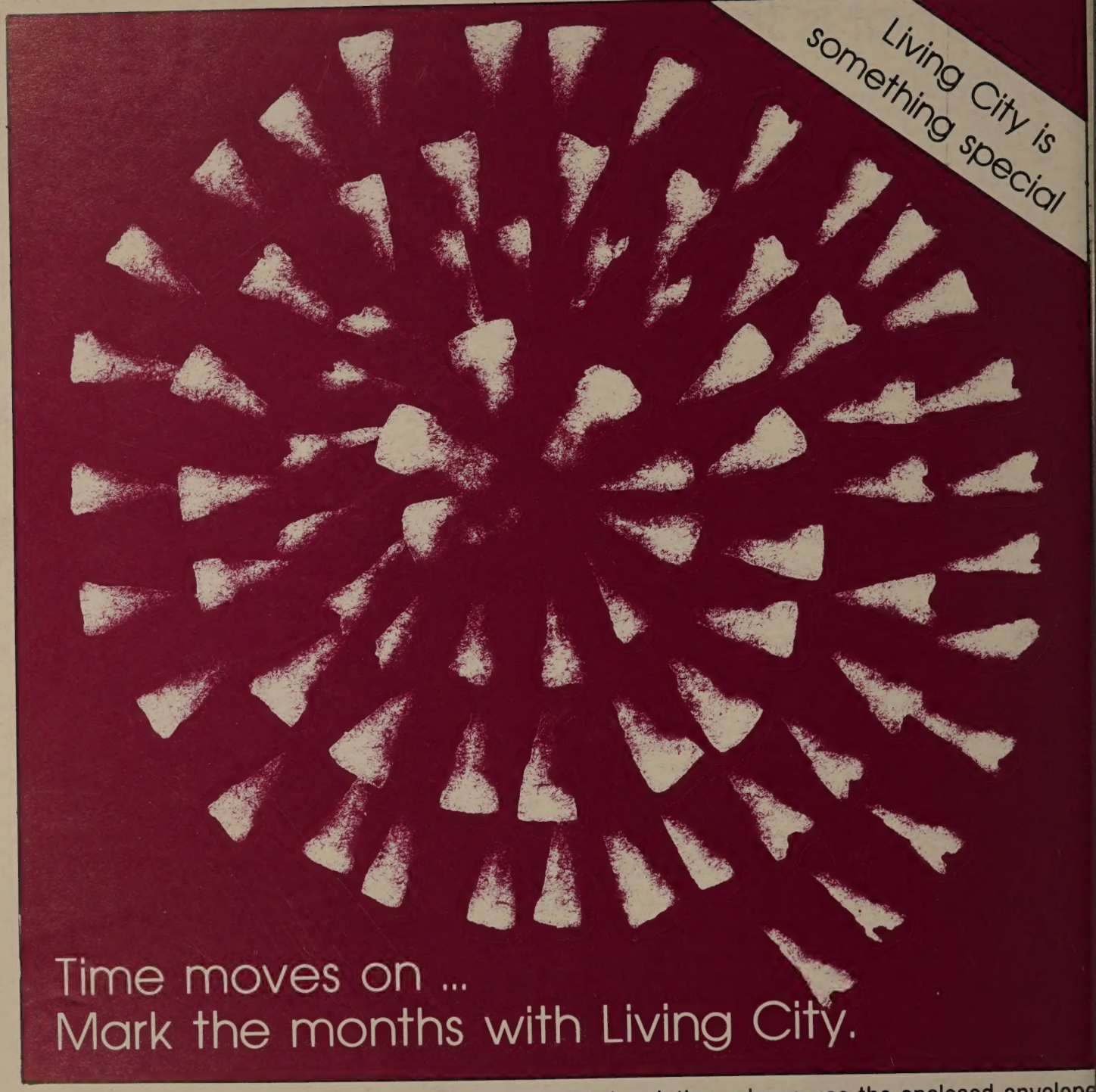

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